

**Hawkhurst Parish Council**

Meeting: **EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING ON ALL SAINTS CHURCH**

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Ref: NG.

**British Legion Hall.**

Typed:

9th October 2016

---

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Mrs J Newman (Chairman), Mr M Appelbe, Mrs M Brinsley (Vice Chairman), Miss M Cronin, Mr P Dartnell, Mr. B Fitzpatrick, Mr J Hunt, Mr P Jones, , Mrs B Weeden, Mr P Whittle, Mr C Williamson

ADDITIONAL CIRCULATION

Mr. S Holden, Mr. G Bland, Mrs. B Palmer, Mr. N Gray,

---

- |     | <u>Adjournment for Public Questions and Comments</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Action |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1.  | <p>The Chairman stated that this meeting was being held in licensed premises only because no alternative premises could be found to hold the meeting at short notice.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |        |
| 1.1 | <p>A resident spoke querying whether All Saints Church (ASC) was worth £650K. He noted it had stood for a very long time already and also that there had been no auction interest. He believed that a lack of parking is a significant problem and that the Parish Council could be buying 'a pig in a poke'.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |        |
| 1.2 | <p>A resident spoke of his concern at the inadequacy of parking in Hawkhurst. He would like to see the space around the car park used as a car park but believed that it may not be allowed. He hopes to buy a property near to ASC and noise in the evenings would be a concern as it could be disturbing.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |        |
| 1.3 | <p>A resident spoke who is a close neighbor of ASC. She partly felt positive that the church could be repaired but wanted to know what it could be used for as evening noise would be a concern as would parking outside due to light pollution. She would be against weddings taking place there.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |        |
| 1.4 | <p>JN responded to the public speakers to say that pre-application advice had been sought from TWBC planners and the conservation officer in the spring. HPC had been told that parking would not be permitted as it would detract from the setting of the Grade II Listed building. More recently TWBC planners were considering the possibility of permitting parking at the front for 'special events' only. HPC have a working party looking at parking generally in the village and for smaller sites to accommodate day parking in particular. The Business Plan will describe the sorts of events envisaged.</p> |        |
| 2.  | <p><u>Apologies for absence</u></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |        |
| 2.1 | <p>Mrs A Hastie, Dr M Robertson, Cllr Sean Holden, Cllr Godfrey Bland, Cllr Bev Palmer.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |        |
| 3.  | <p><u>Declaration of Interests</u></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |        |
| 3.1 | <p>None.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |        |

4. Matters for Discussion

JN reminded those assembled that Members are sitting as Hawkhurst Parish Council for this meeting.

4.1 Principle of a PWLB loan of £650K. JN asked each Member to give their view.

PD: Felt that £650 is justified. Lambert & Foster demonstrated that the offer at this price reflected the proposed use as a community centre. The vendor had come down from £1m. PD agrees with borrowing full asking price and keeping reserves available for other uses.

JH: Feels that the wider Members have received little information to back up the £650 price. He is against proceeding with the offer because the parking problems make the project a non-starter. JH cant decide on the £650K without the surveys and the costs. He believes ASC should be open to the public for a day to look inside.

MC: In general, she believes that used as a community centre, ASC would be a huge asset, especially when compared to Copt Hall. She believes that the cost per household and the costs discussed so far mean that it is very important to go forward with it.

BF: He has reservations. £650K is a lot of money and would go a long way towards a new build. The surveys aren't in yet, so how much more might there be to pay? Would £350K make it safe and usable? He doesn't agree with using the reserves for repairs but if the new Trust would deal with repairs, it is not in place yet. He thinks the lack of parking makes it a dead loss as people do not walk, they drive. He thinks ASC is not worth £650K, nobody wants it and it could make HPC broke.

BW: Agrees with BF and also received a call from a resident asking why TWBC don't make the current owner repair and preserve the building? It would take £400K on top of £650K jus to get a building that is waterproof.

MB: Initially residents were making it clear in NDP meetings that they wanted a Highgate site for a new community centre, but where when we have no land donation? ASC has therefore been proposed. True KGV at The Moor would have parking, but feedback was in favour of Highgate, which means ASC. She is concerned at the cost of the church but will reserve judgement until she sees the surveys are in.

PW: £650K is a lot of money and he wants to see the surveys. He too is concerned about the parking but is also concerned what will happen if ASC is not converted. This may be the only use for it but it may not be viable.

CW: He supports the church as it is an eyesore, but HPC must be prudent. He feels HPC has been prudent so far in taking advice on the value of it and the surveys will tell us more. He feels that many were against a community centre site at The Moor and it is the village's choice and ASC is the only choice at Highgate. The church would attract grants that a new-build would not.

MA: Agree with CW. It is a lot of money but feels it is an important landmark and a good location.

PJ: Doe it pass the value for money test? Since he has seen the state of it, he is moving increasingly against it on the basis of cots. Its not HPC's place to rescue an asset in the private sector even if it is an eyesore.

JN: She reminded Members that £650K as a maximum offer price has been previously agreed by Members. She will ask for the public open day and herself was impressed by the inside of ASC. The developer has promised to mend the hole in the roof. Total HPC reserves are approx. £185K and have been put aside for a community centre for some time, she believes. The owner has failed to sell ASC to a

developer with planning permission. The value to HPC is different as it provides a central site for a community centre. If PWLB makes an offer of a loan, HPC does not have to take it. This decision would be taken after referendum and after all the surveys. That decision is not for now. JN's view is in favour of the church. 12 sites were looked at afresh using a process with criteria for evaluation. ASC came out top. JN feels there is the added advantage of getting rid of a grot spot. Further discussion followed. BW queried how many NDP responses favoured ASC for a community centre as against the full population of the village. BF said that when 17 sites were looked at previously for a community centre site, ASC was ruled out due to concerns about the purchase and running costs. BW believes parking for public buildings should be 1 space per 5 visitors and JN believes that relates to new builds but is seeking guidance from TWBC. MB felt that having got this far, it was important to follow the process through. The surveys may come out good or bad and the Parish should have the final say. JN supported by PD proposed HPC agree the principle of a PWLB loan of £650K. JH, supported by MB counter-proposed *HPC will defer the decision to agree a £650K PWLB loan in principle until the surveys are in*. 7 voted for and 4 against. The counter-proposal was carried.

4.2 Agree the Business Plan for ASC. This will go on HPC's website and the executive summary will be on the referendum letter. It was agreed:

p.15 take out '5%'

p. 17 – remove reference to the library.

As these changes had been already suggested by David Bucket, KALC recommended finance advisor to Parish Councils who had reviewed the plan on Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>.

JN asked each Member for their views on the Business Plan (BP).

PJ: The BP is well argued and well set out. He is still concerned that lack of parking will compromise the activities.

MA: Feels the BP is ok and he has no objection to it.

CW: Generally the BP is taking good shape and needs to be continually improved and refined. CW would not want to see the cost of using spaces to escalate and put out of reach of community groups.

PW: He is happy with the BP content.

MB: Is happy with the content following its review with David Bucket.

JN: The BP has been through a process from the NDP working group and evolved to where it is now and she is happy with it.

BW: She feels costs of expensive specialized trades and materials need to be included, water rates and also council tax, which would be paid by an end user if not HPC, which is exempt. Work on the church should be down to HCT 2016. £57K of the reserves must be retained at all times and funds should remain available for a new sports hall on KGV. BW felt cleaning costs and insurance were not included and the running costs were not defined enough.

BF: He is generally in favour of the BP, although he felt that running costs were generally a bit light and heating was not described in details so could be expensive. Heating is the biggest cost in St Laurence Church.

MC: Agree that BP perhaps needs comparisons of costs, expenses and repairs like for like and more answers on how the hall can be used e.g.: for weddings or not and the revenue sources. Overall she agrees with what is in BP and that it is a good plan.

JH: He doesn't see a centre manager in the BP, perhaps part time. Trustees will need support to let and manage the centre and it should be costed. The well has a separate

listing and this is not reflected in the BP for repairs. JN is proposing that HPC pay for the immediate repairs but this is not costed. JN replied that HCT 2016 would be responsible for the conversion.

PD – Agrees in principle with the BP. Some of the details of the arrangement of the building is light but only ‘potential’ uses are included in the plan. He believes reinstatement of the lightening conductor needs to be addressed.

JN: As for paying for repairs, George Gilbert-Scott helps attract funds from such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund. This could be applied for by HCT2016 or HPC acting as sole trustee for HCT, but it depends on the timing of the initiation of the lease. PJ asked if the scenario would be similar to Kino renting Victoria Hall, which JN confirmed it would. JN explained that she had been able to see a set of costs for a church-converted community hall and these were reflected in the BP. 2 more sets were awaited. Insurance had been estimated at £5,500 per a hall near to Salisbury.

JH, supported by BW proposed HPC defer a decision on the Business Plan to the full council meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup>. This was defeated with 4 for and 7 against. JN supported by MA proposed *HPC accepts the Business Plan as a final draft of the Plan*. 7 voted for , 3 against and MB abstained.

#### 4.3 Agree referendum letter.

Page 1. JH felt it should be made clear how much residents would be liable to pay across the whole 25 year term. MB agreed. The interest rate on the £650K PWLB loan is fixed rate at 2.24% as of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The clerk advised that the Council Tax rate (multiplier) is determined by TWBC and changes each year. It is not therefore possible to predict with certainty how much the precept will be multiplied by in the next 25 years. CW supported by PW proposed *additional wording above the Council tax banding examples to say: ‘The loan will be repaid over 25 years. Please see below the cost example for the current year’*. 10 were for and JH abstained.

CW felt a promise should be made to prevent hire costs increasing unduly. JN suggested a clause in the lease perhaps. BW and PJ both felt the CIO should be free to fix their own prices. CW withdrew his suggestion.

Page 2. This is the executive summary of the business plan. JH favoured changing wording of ‘residents want’ to ‘residents would prefer’, but JN advised the BP now agreed so could not be altered. JH, supported by MB, proposed *adding wording to say ‘and it would be managed by a community trust’ to page 2 , end of paragraph 4 of the referendum letter*. 10 were for and JN abstained.

JH, supported by BW proposed changing the wording relating to parking to ‘No parking will be allowed apart from 7 disabled spaces. 4 voted for, 5 against and 2 abstained. This was not carried.

Map page 4 – all agreed to the plans on pages 3 and 4 of the draft referendum letter. JN supported by PW proposed *HPC agrees the referendum letter with the revisions already agreed*. Members voted unanimously in favour.

#### 4.4 Agree date on poll card.

PD suggested voters should mark with an X. This was not supported. CW, supported by MC proposed that *the words on the poll card ‘only one box’ be underlined and a return date will be agreed at a future time*. All unanimously agreed.

Survey reports. 3 reports are booked for October 11<sup>th</sup> with a cherry picker. Each

4.5 surveyor is conservation accredited with RICS. KALC have advised that 2 but preferably 3 surveys should be obtained ahead of a PWLB loan application. One of the surveyors will share his thoughts with Members at the end of his examination. The surveys will both show what sort of costs would be required to repair ASC and also if there is an opportunity to negotiate on the price. It could be a week before all 3 reports are back and HPC may need to convene a meeting. The Clerk will confirm a meeting time on 11<sup>th</sup> for Members.

Confidential Item.

5. MB as Chair of the Personnel Committee made a report to Members relating to a  
5.1 member of staff.

6. Closure

6.1 The meeting closed at 21.35

Signed.....

Date.....

Julia Newman, Chairman